

2008 Indiana Disability Poll

An annual assessment of issues important to people with disabilities in Indiana



FOCUS ON VOTING AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The findings of the 2008 Disability Poll highlight voting practices and the degree of civic engagement of 367 respondents from the disability community. The disability community sample includes people with disabilities (208), their family members or guardians (76), and advocates (83). The survey was available from November 2007 to June 2008. People responded via an Internet survey or on paper survey forms.

Because there were few differences across types of respondents and income levels, this report is based on the full disability community sample (367), with differences noted when they were sizeable.

THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY IS A STRONG VOTING BLOCK!

- ★ 90% of the disability community sample is registered to vote.
- ★ 88% of individuals with disabilities have a government-issued picture ID, and very few were challenged when they went to vote (8%).
- ★ Nearly 80% of the disability community sample voted in the last election and/or primaries, including 8 out of 10 individuals with disabilities. However, when household incomes were higher than \$50,000, more than 90% voted.
- ★ 7 out of 10 individuals with disabilities voted at their precinct's polling place. Very few (13%) voted absentee. Only 10% said they were not interested in voting.

Polling Place Accessibility

About half of the people with disabilities did not experience any polling place accessibility barriers in the last election. When they did, the top barriers they encountered were:

- Accessible entrances weren't marked
- Main entrances were not accessible
- Parking was not accessible
- Paths to voting areas had obstacles

More education is needed:

- Two-thirds of the disability community sample know their voting rights under the ADA, but nearly half aren't aware of their rights under HAVA, the Help America Vote Act. Almost 75% of people with lower incomes know very little about HAVA.
- If their rights were ever violated, half of the disability community sample reported they would contact either their local election board or file a complaint with the Secretary of State. 16% wouldn't know what to do.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

No matter the income level, the disability community sample does participate in public policy and political activities; less than 10% do nothing at all. The most frequent ways the disability community engages in civic or political activities are:

- ★ Vote
- ★ Sign a petition
- ★ Write to a government official or send a letter to the editor
- ★ Attend a political meeting
- ★ Attend a town meeting or school board meeting

TOP BARRIERS TO CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- ★ Work Schedules
- ★ Lack of transportation, especially people with lower incomes
- ★ Physical barriers
- ★ Not feeling welcome to participate
- ★ Not knowing how to begin, especially people with lower incomes

Top 5 ways people in the disability community get their news and political information, no matter the income level:

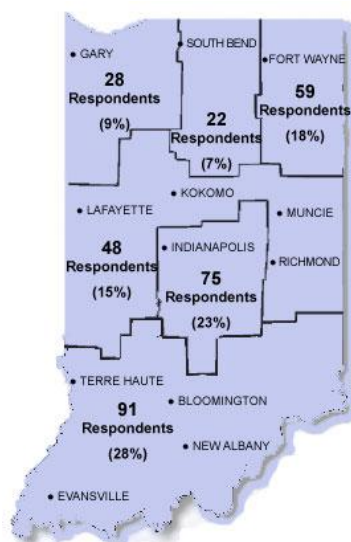
- From television
 - From the newspaper
 - From the internet
 - From the radio
 - Emails from disability organizations
- Least frequent sources of information: employers and union representatives, service providers, news magazines, emails from non-disability organizations, and from candidates.

How the disability community feels about government:

- 40% feel elected officials care about disability issues; 35% feel they do not, across all income groups.
 - Similarly, and across all income groups, 4 out of 10 feel elected officials are making positive changes in their community; another third do not.
 - Six out of 10 of the disability community sample do not trust the national government to do what's right for people with disabilities. Nearly 70% of people with lower incomes do not.
 - Slightly more than half also don't trust either state or local governments to do what's right for people with disabilities.
- But 85% feel it's important to get involved in the political process.
- And 91% feel people with disabilities, their families, and their advocates can have a positive impact on making their community a better place to live!

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

People who responded came from throughout Indiana – responses came from 63 of Indiana's 92 counties (68%). The following are the distributions by telephone area codes:



People who responded live in large and small cities, small towns, rural areas, or on farms.

Location	% of Respondents
Large cities	34%
Town or small cities	44%
Small towns	8%
Rural areas/ farms	14%

The household incomes of people who responded are distributed across a wide range. The following ranges were used to define low, middle, and higher income levels.

Income Levels	% of Respondents
\$25,000 or less	36%
\$25,000 - \$50,000	29%
More than \$50,000	34%